

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT - SAO TOME AND
PRINCIPE

REF: STATE 18330

1. FOLLOWING IS APPROVED TEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT
WHICH WILL BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS JAN. 31. LOCAL OFFI-
CIALS SHOULD BE INFORMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTEL IN-
STRUCTIONS.

QUOTE: SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE IS ONE OF THE NEWEST NATIONS IN
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AFRICA, HAVING RECEIVED ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM PORTUGAL
IN JULY 1975. IT IS A MINI-STATE WITH ONLY 372 SQUARE
MILES OF ISLAND TERRITORY AND APPROXIMATELY 75,000 PEOPLE.
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE PRACTICALLY ON A FIRST-NAME
BASIS WITH MOST CITIZENS. THE PORTUGUESE KEPT THE
ISLANDS ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD DURING FIVE
CENTURIES OF COLONIAL RULE, AND THERE WAS LITTLE VIOLENCE

OR POLITICAL OPPRESSION PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE. THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS BENEFITED FROM THIS RELATIVELY PEACEFUL TRANSITION TO NATIONHOOD AND HAS INSTITUTED A TRANQUIL SINGLE-PARTY POLITICAL SYSTEM WHICH PROTECTS MOST INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS.

1. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON

A. TORTURE

THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT TORTURE IS USED IN SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE.

B. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT SUCH TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT OCCURS.

C. ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT

THERE ARE NO REPORTS AND NO EVIDENCE OF ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT.

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL

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THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT A FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL IS DENIED TO CITIZENS OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE.

E. INVASION OF THE HOME

ACCORDING TO THE BEST INFORMATION AVAILABLE, INVASION OF THE HOME IS NOT PRACTICED.

2. GOVERNMENT POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION

THE GOVERNMENT OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE IS CONSCIOUSLY SOCIALIST AND ITS MARXIST ECONOMIC POLICIES, IN THE JUDGMENT OF SOME OBSERVERS, RISK DAMAGING ITS EFFORTS TO PROVIDE THE BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION. THE GOVERNMENT IS ATTEMPTING TO REORGANIZE AND REFORM THE ECONOMY BUT HAS SEVERELY LIMITED RESOURCES. THE NATIONALIZATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR COULD, THEREFORE, RESULT IN ECONOMIC DECLINE. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE MOTIVATED BY IDEOLOGICAL CONCERNS AND IS UNLIKELY TO BE

DISSUADED FROM ITS "REVOLUTIONARY" PROGRAM BY IMPLE-

MENTATION PROBLEMS. SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE HAS BEEN PROMISED A LARGE AMOUNT OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES, BUT IT IS STILL UNCLEAR HOW MUCH OF THIS AID WILL ACTUALLY BE FORTHCOMING.

3. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY

THE CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES THE BASIC FREEDOMS OF THOUGHT, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY, BUT POLITICAL EXPRESSION IS UNCLASSIFIED

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LIMITED BY THE COUNTRY'S SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY. THE PRESS IS GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED. ASSEMBLY FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES MUST HAVE THE SANCTION OF THE RULING PARTY.

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION

THE STANDARD EXIT VISA REQUIREMENT AND THE PHYSICAL ISOLATION OF THE ISLANDS ARE THE ONLY BARRIERS TO MOVEMENT OUT OF THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING EMIGRATION. THERE ARE NO KNOWN CONTROLS ON INTERNAL TRAVEL.

C. FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS CONTROLLED BY THE MOVEMENT FOR THE LIBERATION OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE (MLSTP), THE COUNTRY'S SINGLE PARTY. FORMER MEMBERS OF THE NOW DISBANDED OPPOSITION GROUPS REMAIN IN THE COUNTRY AND APPARENTLY SUFFER NO PREJUDICIAL TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF THE GOVERNMENT. SEVERAL POLITICAL OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE THOUGHT TO BE IN EXILE IN ANGOLA, BUT PRESIDENT DA COSTA HAS ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY THAT THE EXILES ARE FREE TO RETURN WHENEVER THEY WISH.

THE PRESIDENT IS ELECTED BY THE POPULAR ASSEMBLY FROM A LIST OF CANDIDATES NAMED BY THE MLSTP. UNDER THE CONSTITUTION, THE ASSEMBLY IS THE SUPREME ORGAN OF THE STATE, AND LEGISLATORS ARE ELECTED FOR A PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS BY UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE.

4. GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE AND RECORD REGARDING INTERNATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

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WE ARE NOT AWARE THAT ANY OUTSIDE GROUPS HAVE SOUGHT TO
INVESTIGATE CONDITIONS. END QUOTE VANCE

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